

Front Page - 2020 06

Encouragement In The Dark Days of Life - Part 2

Introduction

When reading through the historical books of the New Testament, that is Matthew through Acts, it is observed the Lord said the expression, “Be of good cheer” five times. On four occasions He said it on earth and once from Heaven. The references are:

- a) To the man sick of the palsy (Matt. 9:2; Mk. 2:3; Lk. 5:18)
- b) To the woman with the issue of blood (translated “comfort” in KJV) (Matt. 9:22; Mk. 5:25; Lk. 8:43)
- c) To the disciples in the ship (Matt. 14:27; Mk. 6:50)
- d) To the disciples (Jn. 16:33)
- e) To Paul (Acts 23:11)

The Friends of The Man Sick With The Palsy

It can only be one who has known what it is to have been sick or handicapped in their body activities for a long time that can know how this man felt. I know a beloved brother who was a big strong man and caught West Nile Virus some 15 years ago. As a result of that insect bite, this dear brother lay near death multiple times, and now all these years later is restricted to a wheelchair and can scarcely move only one hand. I have no idea what that is like, but he could understand something of what the palsied man felt as he lay for an unknown duration on his bed. To have a mind that functions perfectly and a damaged body is a dreadful affliction. As we watch the bodies or minds of those we love begin to fail, we feel for them and wish we could do something to help.

I would understand from the Biblical narrative this is how the friends who brought the palsied man to Jesus felt. Human sympathy began its work in their hearts. They had to try somehow to help their friend. Then a plan began to dawn on their minds. I can visualize them sitting at a table with him, listening and getting more excited, at last there could be some hope. They would get the paralyzed friend to Jesus which meant they would have to carry him. Would they be able to carry a dead weight for a distance? What other ways were there, he could not sit on a donkey? Furthermore, there was not a lot of time for the Rabbi would only be in the area a short time. This was urgent.

There are two matters for consideration at this point:

- a) The spiritual level:
 - i) The spiritual concern we have for the unsaved is to bring them to the Lord for spiritual healing. Perhaps the church we go to has gospel meetings, but the questions to be deeply considered are: “How concerned am I for the eternal destiny of every individual and for those of my own kith and kin, the millions of individuals around me who are in dire need of spiritual healing and will be forsaken by God for all eternity”?
 - ii) Are the speakers just presenting a message that is as dry as a bone? Is there any depth of passion and urgency in their speaking, and is there a burden for souls in their lives?
 - iii) Are they the best communicators of the gospel that can be obtained? I have, as I suspect we all have, sat for forty five minutes listening to a brother who is doing his best but should never be on a platform for he speaks in a droll and monotone voice repeatedly. Speaking is not the brother’s gift.
- b) The practical physical level:
 - i) All afflictions are not physical and there must be very few who have never felt like the man on the stretcher. See him curtailed of freedom of life, and when applying this to ourselves our restrictions may be due to financial hardships which press upon us, lack of good employment, or the death of a loved one. It may be the loss of mobility as old age sets in or the tragedy of an accident which resulted in a body or mind marred for life.

Front Page - 2020 06

Encouragement In The Dark Days of Life - Part 2

The Greater Blessing Received

Thankfully the palsied man had friends who brought him to Jesus, the result of which he received a greater blessing than ever he dreamed of. The friends had hoped the Rabbi could do something, after all He healed others crippled by the same disease (Matt. 4:24; 8:6). Since He had healed others could He not then do it for their friend who lay helpless on the bed? If only the Rabbi would heal the palsied man then he could live life again, perhaps restored to his wife and family and not be a burden to anyone.

Having brought him to where the Lord was they met a major obstacle. Many others had come to hear or see this superlative Teacher, indeed the house was so crowded folk were standing outside. There was no way they could get through that crowd of people. Determined to bring the man to the attention of the Lord they had an idea, let the man down through a hole in the roof. It would mean having a questioning audience, especially the owner of the home, but that did not matter. Their friend needed help and Jesus was the only one who could help him. It certainly would get the attention of Jesus.

The Words of The Lord

I am sure those who carried the man and the man himself were astounded at the first words the Lord said. It was not a word about healing, not a question such as, "Wilt thou be made whole?". The first words of the Lord were not, "Take up your bed and walk". Instead, the Lord cut right through all their expectancies to the man's greater need. His first words were, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee!" (Matt. 9:2). They had not come for that, they had come for his healing!

- a) It was a profound statement, "Be of good cheer, Thy sins be forgiven thee". The religious leaders would have been stunned at the audacity of the Lord pronouncing forgiveness of sins.
- b) Of course one can imagine the scribes looking at this young thirty plus year old man and mocking the words of the Lord, "Thy sins be forgiven thee". There can be little doubt that the man had been troubled about his past, else the Lord never would have said this. Very possibly no one else knew, but the Lord did. Consequently, He went right to the heart of the man's deeper concerns. This was a declarative statement. It was not a word spoken about him but a word spoken to him and issued healing power within him. So with salvation. At the moment of salvation the sinner is declared justified, reconciled, redeemed, sanctified, all declarations to the individual. At that moment there is a power put into the individual that changes their interests, attitudes, habits and the enslaving power of sin. What a blessing it was to every child of God when they, not only at conversion but multiples of times since when feeling the curtailing burden of sin, they heard the words, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee".
- c) Their response was, "Who can forgive sins but God alone". Despite all the evidences shown by the Lord, they failed to see that the man who said this was indeed God of very God.

Spiritual Application to The Unsaved Today

When an individual is under the burden of guilt and sin and conviction runs deep in the heart and mind, then upon hearing the glorious gospel hears of how they can be saved, that is a great relief. Then putting their eternal destiny completely on the finished work of the Lord at Calvary, they hear the peace giving comforting words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee". That is blessedness indeed.

... Rowan Jennings